Societal Impacts of ICT Use: Understanding Bystanders' Proactive Reporting Responses to Online Harassment"

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Abstract:

Online harassment, a type of cyberbullying behavior, poses serious risks to users of social networking sites (SNSs) and challenges to platform providers. In recent years, many SNS providers have implemented built-in reporting functions to combat such aversive online behavior. However, the effectiveness of these reporting tools in encouraging proactive intervention remains relatively unknown. To address this gap, this study answers a recent call for understanding of the societal impact of the use of information technology and aims to identify the underlying mechanisms driving bystanders' decision to use these built-in functions to report online harassment on SNSs. Drawing on theory of cognitive appraisal, we develop a research model that explains how a set of appraisal factors shape bystanders' willingness to use the built-in reporting function on SNSs. We empirically tested the research model with active Facebook users. The data analysis shows support for most of our hypotheses. Specifically, our results show that bystanders' perceived personal responsibility for addressing the incident, perceived effectiveness of the reporting function in curbing online harassment, social norms are pivotal appraisal factors explaining bystanders' willingness to use the built-in function to report. Shedding light on how to effectively mitigate the negative consequences of online harassment, this study yields valuable insights that guide the development of a brighter and safer digital society.

Biography:

Christy M.K. Cheung is Associate Professor in Hong Kong Baptist University. She received her Ph.D. from City University of Hong Kong. Her research interests include social media, e-commerce, knowledge management, IT adoption and usage, and societal implications of information technology. She has published over one hundred refereed articles in international journals, conference proceedings, and research textbooks. Her research articles have been published in Decision Support Systems (DSS), Information & Management (I&M), Journal of Information Technology (JIT), Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology (JASIST), Journal of Management Information Systems (JMIS), MIS Quarterly (MISQ), among others.